

Focus on the important issues

Governor Mario Cuomo, in his bid for re-election, is trying to take the public's eye off the ball by drawing attention to his opponents' views on abortion and gun control. Come on governor, give us a break! These single, emotional issues are not what the race is all about.

The Long Island gubernatorial race should be centered on three problems and what the next governor will do about them.

First--unaffordable real estate taxes. Nearly 70% of every homeowner's real estate tax bill goes to

fund public school education. The state mandates that a prescribed course of education be offered to every student throughout the state. These courses and curriculum allow every student to achieve a Regents diploma if they so desire. The cost of offering this education is between 44% and 48% of the entire school budget. State aid this year is about 40% to 41% of most budgets.

We would like to see one of the candidates take the position that it is the state's constitutional obligation to provide the students with an education. Because it is the state's obli-

gation, the state will pay for and administer the basic offering of education for the curriculum they have mandated. This will be paid for using state aid and the difference between state aid funds and the cost of offering these courses will be made up by broad-based taxes or savings in other areas of the state budget.

Local school districts would then be free to offer any enhancements or electives above the basic state education. The funding for this would come from real estate taxes and the voters would give their approval or disapproval on Election Day when

the most people go to the polls. This move could reduce school taxes by up to 60%.

Second--utility rates: the Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO) charges the highest utility rates in the nation. The investor's rate of return is 28.61%, the best rate of return in the nation for an electrical utility. The national average for all electrical utilities is 11.74%. LILCO recently told a Wall Street gathering that they will make \$1.1 billion in profit off the backs of the ratepayers. This is obscene.

We would like to hear the solution to this problem that the gubernatorial candidates will offer. Will they appoint a new Public Service Commission? How will they ensure that these commissioners will represent the taxpayers and stop coddling the utilities? Are they in favor of retail wheeling of electrical power to create competition for LILCO?

Third--Medicaid and welfare costs: 46 out of the 50 states pay for Medicaid costs. New York reneges on its obligation and forces its counties to pick up 50% of the cost. It's a state obligation, not the counties.

We would like to know when the state is going to assume its full obligation and the plan for implementing such a change.

New York is known as a welfare haven. The taxpayers can no longer afford to assume the responsibility for feeding, clothing and housing the poor from all over the world. The system is fraught with abuse.

We would like to hear the gubernatorial candidates speak out in real terms, not rhetoric, on how they plan to address this situation.

These are three of the most important issues that are affecting Long Island. They are the major issues which impact on the ability of the residents to continue living in this state. These are the issues which must be addressed with potential solutions. Let's get on with it!

And why not?

Time for common sense

Clinton's health plan dead?

There is dwindling support for the Clinton health plan. With the upcoming congressional and senatorial races looming in November, Clinton is losing supporters everyday.

Public support for Clinton's plan has dropped by almost 50%. The more people got to know about Clinton's intentions, the less they liked the idea of socialized medicine and the government deciding who would live or die.

There are also about 10 other healthcare bills being bandied around in Congress. None of them fully or realistically address the problems or offer any cost savings.

According to statistics that have been released, 13% of the American population does not have medical insurance coverage. But, even this small percentage of the population can get coverage through clinics and hospitals. Even if they can't pay for the medical care, it must be provided.

The two big, positive issues contained in Clinton's plan was portability and the availability of insurance for everyone. Congress should address both of these issues by drafting legislation that allows an individual who is a member of a group insurance plan to continue with their coverage after they have left employment by buying this coverage on their own.

For those who can't get coverage because of pre-existing conditions, the government, itself, should offer coverage to these people on an assigned risk basis as we do with automotive insurance. Each company that underwrites medical insurance would have to take its fair share of these cases on a proportional basis to the business that they do. The cost of the high risk cases would be spread over all other cases. If legislation was enacted covering these two key issues, the majority of the problems would no longer be there.

Several months ago, we editorialized in support of a plan that would allow individuals to put away a small

percentage of their income into a tax-free, IRA-type account. This account could only be drawn upon for medical expenses, the everyday type of things that make up routine medical care.

Employers would offer a major medical plan that would cover catastrophic illness, large doctor bills and hospitalization costs. It is estimated that such a plan would cost, on a national basis, approximately \$1,500 per family. If the cost of the plan was split between the employee and the employer, everybody could and would be covered. This would be a common sense approach to a serious problem that would not require an enormous new bureaucracy, would not ration care, and would not force people to use doctors and hospitals not of their choosing.

In another editorial, we also recommended that the federal government pay for doctors' education. It costs almost one-quarter-of-a-million

dollars to become a doctor. This is part of the reason why the cost of medical care is so high today. If the doctors had their medical education paid for by the taxpayers, but were required to work pro bono two days a week, the indigent and less fortunate in society would have top-flight care available to them and fees would be kept down as there would not be enormous medical school bills for the doctors to pay back. The plan also would have an additional benefit, as the very best students in America could go to medical school, where they can't under our current system. This would be a win-win situation based on common sense and, therefore, it probably doesn't stand a chance in hell of ever being considered.

We hope Congress does not feel the urge to pass some ill thought-out bureaucratic medical plan rather than coming home naked.

And why not?

Counting our blessings

America, we love you

One night last week we attended a concert in the park sponsored by the Southampton Cultural Center. The performers were the "Isotope Stompers," a Dixieland band that travels throughout Long Island. The setting was Agawam Park, just off Jobs Lane, by the lake in Southampton.

There were about 500 people in attendance. Most had brought chairs or blankets, picnic baskets and refreshments. The scene was a Norman Rockwell painting from the old "Post" era--little girls in long dresses, straw hats on some of the women,

balloons in the air, and families celebrating together. This was Americana at its best. This was the Long Island that we love. This was Southampton with its reputation of the rich and the famous offering a free concert, as they do every week to anyone and everyone who chooses to take part in this pleasure.

We relaxed. We people watched. Everyone mingled, danced, applauded and enjoyed themselves. A wonderful, melancholy mood prevailed.

Toward the end of the evening,

the emcee made a couple of casual remarks that struck home with this writer. He casually said, "Aren't we lucky to be taking part in a concert in the park on this beautiful summer evening? When you think about the horror that is going on around the world, you must appreciate how lucky we are."

In my own mind I flashed back to horror scenes in Rwanda, and the butchering for religious reasons in Bosnia. Wow! Do we have a lot to be thankful for and we don't even realize it.

And why not?

Hypocrisy and state mandates

There's good news and bad news in the area of school transportation. A new state law recently signed by Governor Mario Cuomo, which goes into effect on July 1, 1995, requires school districts to continue to transport students to and from regular school programs in accordance with mileage limitations previously adopted by voters in case the budget is defeated.

From the standpoint of the safety of the children, that's the good news. For the taxpayers, the news is not so good. The major portion of the cost will be borne by the local residents, not the state.

Transportation costs, at one time, were reimbursed by the state to the tune of 90% of the school district's ex-

penditures. But no more. Included in the Deficit Reduction Package (DRP) enacted in 1991-92, in order for the state to bail itself out of its years of overspending, school districts statewide were assessed a deficit reduction against school aid. Plainly put, this means the state cut the 90% reimbursement for approved transportation expenses to a reimbursement which varied by the district's wealth, as was the case with building aid.

But the state showed some "compassion." The DRP included a "minimum aid ratio" which guaranteed each district would get at least—are you ready for this?—a 5% reimbursement for transportation expenses. So, not only did the state cut back on school aid, causing local districts intense financial

difficulty, they compounded the problem by monkeying around, in fact virtually obliterating, the transportation aid formula.

Local school districts vary in the amount of aid they are reimbursed for transportation, according to the "wealth" of the district. Those amounts range from the 5% minimum to 75%. Most are lower than the higher figure. All have lost valuable dollars.

One can hardly argue against anything that will ensure the safety of children. We have long advocated changes in the transportation limit regulations which would include safety factors as an important ingredient as opposed to mileage limits. But we find it hypocritical to read the words of a state legislator who declared: "Enactment of this law means that our school children will no longer be placed in jeopardy, in effect being held hostage in the annual battle over the school budget." What do you call reducing transportation aid? A display of concern? Cutting back on this aid to pay for spending excesses on the state level by our state legislators is similar to offering the lives of the students as a sacrifice to business as usual spending and waste.

Where is this great show of concern when it comes to eliminating state mandates—and this law is a great example—which require local districts to enact costly programs without one red cent of financial assistance to carry out those mandates? Where is this dedication to the children when it comes to revising the edicts that are hurting the

educational lives of the children? The tenure law is a prime example.

Why haven't our legislators seriously studied implementing a system whereby the state would totally fund the educational costs for the basic subjects needed for a Regents diploma, with the districts assuming the financial obligation for the educational extras they want?

If our state legislators have such concern for the safety of the children, why did they cut the transportation aid? Surely they know of the financial problems faced by the districts and the taxpayers who must support them. Now that the deficit has supposedly evaporated, and we have a reported surplus in this election year, why haven't our state legislators restored the aid to its original levels? And why haven't they insisted that school districts put their transportation contracts out to bid as a means of cutting costs? Why not put a bidding requirement in place for a district to be eligible for transportation aid?

This is an election year for state legislators. Their press releases will brag about Albany action that they claim will benefit the people. There will be no press releases about the behind-the-scenes cuts that take more out of your pocket. Or the lack of action on important changes to improve the educational system. Don't let them get away from it. As a voter, focus on these issues. Ask the hard questions. The dollars you save will be your own.

And why not?

Don't pierce cap

The Suffolk County Legislature placed a cap on the county budget and spending for a very good reason. Elected politicians had trouble saying "no" to too many expenditures. As a result, county taxes were skyrocketing beyond inflation and the taxpayers who could no longer afford this additional burden were being forced out of their homes.

The tax cap measure calls for a two-thirds majority vote for piercing. Thus, 14 of the 18 legislators must agree that the piercing represents an emergency that can't be dealt with any other way.

Back in April, the legislature approved a county executive settlement with the Suffolk County Community College faculty. The legislature's Budget Review Office warned that the settlement would require the county to overspend the budget, and the only way to fund the increases was to pierce the cap. The Gaffney administration argued that this was not true. The faculty representative said it was not true. The legislature bought the rhetoric and now the grim reaper has come home to rest.

The county must pierce the legislative cap on taxes to fund this agreement. They must pierce the cap or find another way to make up for the money that they gave away. They have a couple of options: they can pierce the cap, which would allow the college to use a \$7 million surplus to meet the college's higher financial needs, or they can cut expenditures in other projects, which they should do in any event.

Using the current college surplus sounds like the easy thing to do, but the easiest action is not always the right action. In this case, it has been our understanding the surplus has been a reserve fund, an insurance policy against further tuition increases at the college. In the 1991-92 school year the college boosted the rates by 16.3%. The tuition was increased again in 1992-93 by another 17.8%, a total of 34.1% in these two years alone.

If these surplus funds are used up to pay for the higher salaries and added costs to operate the college, who will guarantee the tuition will not be increased again to pay for future salary hikes and expenditure needs? How much higher can they go before they deprive our local students a chance of higher education? Will the legislators guarantee the tuition will not be increased again to satisfy the spending urges of the college.

Exempting the college from the county cap, a proposal put forth by Presiding Officer Donald Blydenburgh (R-Hauppauge), is not the answer. Have we forgotten that when the county executive cut positions from the college staff in a previous budget proposal, the college administration simply added them back and took the money from equipment and computer purchases? Will the legislators now reward that action by permitting the college administrators to pierce the cap to purchase equipment they should have been purchasing all along? Exempting the college administration from the cap is exempting them from the responsibility of sound, efficient management. That's wrong!

The taxpayers in this county cannot afford to fund the generosity of the legislature and the county executives, so adding to the cost to the taxpayers is not an option, in our view. When the cap was put into existence, the taxpayers were in better shape than they are today. The recession has not abated here on Long Island. LILCO (Long Island Lighting Company) rates and school taxes have increased. Incomes have remained stagnant or gone down. There are fewer and fewer fat cats left. There are more and more residents who can't cut back, can't make their fixed expenses and are trying to sell their homes in desperation.

We can't afford to bail out the elected officials' mistakes again. Don't pierce the cap, find the cuts to make up for your mistakes.

And why not?

Play the game, pay the price

The State University at Stony Brook faces the possibility of losing \$8 million in potential grants from the Department of Defense.

The university does not allow U.S. military forces to recruit on campus. This is a throwback to the Vietnam War era.

University officials are up in arms. They can't see why their antimilitary policies should get in the way of their taking the dole from the military.

Come on guys, you may be academia, but you haven't given up all rights

Top public official

We often use this column to bang around bureaucrats, if they are not doing their job or accepting responsibility for their actions. It's nice to have an opportunity to voice praise rather than a complaint.

Last week, we were happy to see that John Egan, the head of the New York State Transportation Department, took full responsibility for the chaos that has been caused by closing two lanes on the Long Island Expressway and other major arteries for construction work.

We were not surprised, because Egan is a stand-up type of guy. Over our years in publishing, we have known him in different capacities in which he has served in New York State government under both Republican and Democratic administrations. Egan is a

hands-on, take-charge kind of person who immerses himself into as many details in the departments that he handles as he can. He is comfortable talking with the governor or a laborer. He treats both with dignity and respect.

After other bureaucrats tried to blame everybody but themselves for the chaos on the roads, Egan walked in and said, "The state is responsible. I am the head of this department. I am the guy at fault." Having made this announcement, he has already set about changing the procedures and, we believe, will bring sanity out of the chaos.

Egan knows the meaning of public service. He is an example that others who work for the state and other governments should follow.

And why not?

to common sense. If you play the game, you have got to expect to pay the penalty.

Unfortunately, the people that will get hurt are the people the research will benefit and the lower echelon employees who work in this research. The eggheads who decide to punish the military will be secure in their jobs and will lick their wounds and continue to pick up their paychecks because they are tenured.

The obvious solution to this dilemma is for the university to rescind

its outdated policy. There is no Vietnam bogeyman today. The United States Armed Forces, although there for defense, are being used more and more for humanitarian purposes, to save starving children, bring stability to chaos and save human lives. Recruiters on campus might just be looking for individuals who acquired education in these fields to join their proud militaristic, humanistic establishment.

The university should respond positively. There is no logical reason why they shouldn't.

And why not?

The 1994 primary races

Primaries are healthy for politics. Healthy if they are run for the right reasons. They give the rank and file the opportunity to have their choice rather than accepting the leaders' and the committees' decisions.

This year, the Republican choice for governor, George Pataki, is being challenged by former State Republican Chairman Richard Rosenbaum. Pataki was the choice of the organization at the sometimes raucous Republican convention. Rosenbaum ignored the convention, electing to go the petition route. Although he was the head of the state Republican Party, he now claims to be an outsider and politically defines himself as a Rockefeller Republican, which most people interpret as a liberal Republican whose views are more in line with the Democratic philosophy than Republican.

Pataki is also being challenged on the Conservative line by Robert

Relph. Pataki won the nomination from the statewide Conservative organization based upon the Conservative realization that without mutual support for Pataki, Mario Cuomo could squeak in.

Relph, in a bid for leadership of the Conservative Party, is willing to throw away the opportunity of defeating Cuomo.

On the Democratic side, Cuomo is being challenged by Lenora Fulani. This race has not been closely defined. The media has paid almost no attention to it as it is believed that Cuomo, no matter what, will win this primary hands down.

The Democrats have a four-way primary for attorney general that is ill-defined, with no candidates making any particular points.

In the race for United States Senate, the Democrats have a primary be-

tween Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Al Sharpton. This is based on race and comments that Moynihan has made in the past. Sharpton desires to voice black positions.

Back home in Suffolk County, in the race for the judge of the Surrogate Court, Gail Prudenti, the Republican nominee, finds herself facing Democrat James Doyle for the Conservative line. This is an interesting race because it is not about the two candidates but rather an inter-party fight between the factions of the Conservative Party. If qualifications and philosophy were the sole criteria, Prudenti would win the Conservative nomination hands down.

Republicans are often characterized as Conservatives. True Republican beliefs are very much akin to the philosophy of the Conservatives. In fact, the Conservative movement was founded against Governor Nelson Rockefeller liberalizing the Republican

Party. At one time, the Conservative movement was pure. They then got involved with trading endorsements for patronage. The rank and file rebelled, as they should have. Unfortunately, the pendulum swung too far. Those who were rebelling against leadership have taken their wrath out on candidates backed by the organization, candidates who have legitimate Conservative credentials. It would seem to us that in their rebellious mood, supporting candidates who believe in Democratic or Liberal philosophies over candidates who espouse Conservative philosophy is just as wrong as some of the moves that have been made by the leadership. Prudenti clearly is more attuned to the Conservatives than Doyle.

In the First Congressional District, it is a free-for-all. The incumbent is George Hochbrueckner. He is beatable by the right candidate.

The organization solidly backed Michael Forbes at the convention. There was no floor fight. No one raised an objection. Forbes has excellent Republican credentials, was a new face with an impressive background. He seemed like the perfect candidate.

When the deadline for filing petitions came, two other candidates challenged Forbes--John Scott Prudenti and Michael Strong.

Prudenti evidently filed counting on name recognition. There has been the suggestion made that powers within the Republican Party do not want Forbes to succeed as they envision the spot belonging to their children and others that they have long harbored hopes for. If Forbes was to win, their cherished hopes would be diminished and the seat may not become open again for a Republican in a number of years. So much for party unity and doing what is right to support a Republican candidate who has had the best chance in almost 30 years of becoming the congressman from the First Congressional District.

Forbes is also being challenged on the Conservative line by Daniel Fennesy from Port Jefferson. This again is an inter-party Conservative fight that has nothing to do with Conservative philosophy or the opportunity of electing a Conservative/Republican to Congress. If Forbes is able to win both the Republican and the Conservative primaries, he has better than an even chance of upsetting Hochbrueckner.

Prudenti is not on the Conservative line and, therefore, his chances against Hochbrueckner are substantially less than 50-50, even if he was to win the Republican primary. Likewise, Strong, an independent who has very limited support, can do nothing but aid and abet Hochbrueckner in this three-way race.

There are other primary races which we will report upon in the news pages of this paper. In the next four weeks before Primary Day, things should heat up and become interesting.

To vote in a primary, you must be registered in the party of your choice. If you are not registered yet, do so. Plan to vote on September 13. Your vote could determine not only who the candidate will be, but the philosophy that will guide our country, our state and our county in the future.

And why not?

School austerity is a hoax

Webster's dictionary defines austerity as being "a severe and rigid economy." That definition is fast losing reality, however.

When voters go to the polls and vote on school board budgets, the outcome is supposed to be that the budget proposed by the school board is accepted or the school district goes on austerity. It is supposed to operate on a severe and restricted budget.

Over the last two decades, severe and restricted has come to mean spending just about as much money as, and in some cases more than, the original budget called for that was defeated. It's a liberal interpretation of the law; a manipulation of the regulations, and why school boards have been able to thumb their nose at the voters.

While sports are eliminated under an austerity budget, few realize that the salaries for the coaches may have been, in many instances, included in an austerity budget. As one school administrator once explained it to us: "If the community, through booster clubs or other groups, raises enough funds to support a sports team's activities, we must be sure there is enough money in the budget to pay the coaches' salaries, which are mandated." If the community raises the funds to field a team, why not the funds for the coaches' salaries? Or better yet, why not volunteered efforts to fill the coaching spots? Because union contracts would not permit volunteered efforts, was the reply. If the community doesn't raise the funds, those budgeted coaches' salaries wind up being used as budget transfers, or become surplus funds which are also utilized as board members desire.

School budget votes have become nothing more than a hoax. When budgets are defeated they are put up time and time again until the voters are worn down and give up in disgust. Everytime this happens, people become more disgusted and disillusioned with their government. They feel disenfranchised. They have been.

You can't blame the voters for dis-

liking their elected officials because of this. The elected officials who have created the situation and have allowed it to go on unabated are the governor, the state Senate and the state Assembly. This is where the buck stops. They are the ones that run state government. They make the rules and allow the regulations to be interpreted at will.

An austerity budget should be a budget that only allows for the basic education package required by the state for a Regents diploma. All electives and additional curriculum chosen by the local school board should be eliminated when the voters turn down the budget.

In most school districts on Long Island, this amounts to 44% to 48% of the total budget. Your Assembly, Senate and governor, who have failed to put this principle into law, have been derelict in their responsibilities. They have left the local taxpayers out to dry. They are the ones that are forcing the local homeowners to abandon their hopes and their dreams by forcing them to put their homes up for sale because they no longer can afford them.

They are the ones that have created the insanity of spending more on a grade school education than on a

quality college education at a private school.

To complicate matters, the one big item that was affected by austerity--school busing--now must be offered as a mandated part of the budget because of a bill signed into law by Governor Mario Cuomo, a law that goes into effect July 1, 1995.

Now if voters turn down the budget, the only things that will be affected are extracurricular activities and utilization of the buildings by the community for purposes other than school use.

Between now and November, all of the above mentioned officials must hear from you. They are up for re-election. Let's hear what they have to say. What message of hope do they bring us? If they are mute on the subject, it will be business as usual and that might be a good reason to dump the incumbents. If they speak out with force, examine the rhetoric carefully. Are they playing to the audience? Do their proposals have any chance of succeeding?

The ball is in their court, but the voting lever will be in your hands on November 8.

And why not?

Remember:

Lights in rain

After weeks of drought, we have noted when it has rained, however slight that may be, a lot of drivers are forgetting to put on their lights. It's the law!

You must turn on your lights when visibility has been diminished or you put your windshield wipers on. It is good advice, with much common sense.

Visibility in rain or fog can be reduced to almost zero. The brilliance of lights makes oncoming cars notice-

able at greater distances. This gives you and other drivers a better chance to avoid an accident.

Someday, one of the automobile companies will add a feature in new cars that will automatically turn on your lights when the windshield wipers are engaged. Until then, we will have to remember to do it manually.

Let's all do our part by lighting up.

And why not?

Dangerous legislature precedent

The Suffolk County Legislature, in a session that lasted until 5 a.m., opened Pandora's box a week ago Tuesday. They pierced the county's budget cap law, spending more than they are budgeted to take in.

Like little children knowing that they have done wrong, they put restrictions on how the money can be spent. They limited the new funds for the Suffolk County Community College to equipment only. If the college wants to spend the funds on employees or administrators, they must come back for another hearing.

The cap was placed on the budget to stop the legislators from saying "yes" to every request that came before them. It was there to force them to live within their financial obligations and responsibilities.

Proponents of piercing the cap have argued that the action did not involve additional expenditure of county funds, that the money is to come from a surplus accumulated by the college. As we have noted before, that surplus was originally intended to protect students from an addi-

tional tuition increase on top of the 34% tuition hikes imposed by the college over a two-year period. While additional surplus funds remain, cutting away at that total lessens the protection students have against future tuition increases. If the college administration is permitted to utilize these monies for whatever reasons they choose, the students, and their parents, will wind up paying the bill. Sooner or later that bill may well reach a point where the higher education they seek may be out of the financial reach of many future

students.

Now that they have pierced the cap for the community college, how are they going to say "no" to the county workers, the staff-level people who have not had a contract or any increases in the last three years. Up until a week ago Tuesday, they could have said that the cap was in place. We can't approve any additional spending without a super majority. We are only allowed to pierce the cap for emergencies. This argument is now mute.

No matter how you cut it, the community college needs did not constitute an emergency that affected the health and well being of the citizens of the county. As citizens and taxpayers, you have a right to be angry and frustrated at those individuals who have asked to be your county legislators. They are doing it again. They are giving away the store, even though they are the ones who admitted in the past that they could not say "no" and therefore needed to refrain themselves.

As a resident taxpayer, don't be surprised when these legislators are placed in the position of having to raise your taxes—or tuition costs increase—because they did not know how to say "no."

And why not?

The Blydenburgh stadium

Can we really afford it?

Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer Donald Blydenburgh (R-Hauppauge) has proposed the building of a domed stadium in Suffolk County. His preferred location is on county-owned land on the south side of the Long Island Expressway in Yaphank, in the area of the county farm.

Sounds like a great idea to us, as long as the taxpayers will not be asked to pay for the creation, either directly through taxes or by a pledge of the full faith and credit of the county. We have other priorities that are more important than a stadium at this time.

A stadium, if constructed, without direct or indirect governmental financing could be built. It could house a major league sports team or teams. It could be a magnet for conventions, shows and exhibitions. The construction of the stadium would be a shot in the arm to the construction industry. Hundreds of part-time and full-time jobs could be created to operate the facility if it was successful. If there are entrepreneurs and venture capitalists out there who see the merit of this project, and know they can profit from it, we say, go for it.

Let the county offer them favorable terms in the beginning to lease the land, terms that would give the taxpayers a return in the future. Give them the opportunity to pay progressive rent payments in lieu of taxes. Make available interest-free bonds that do not require the full faith and credit of the taxpayers behind them. Give them all the assistance they need to cut through the bureaucracy, the red tape. This alone should be worth millions. Don't build a domed stadium using tax dollars that are needed to provide essential services to the people of Suffolk County.

This futuristic project takes the eye off the ball that the county executive and all county legislators should be concentrating on—the huge shortfall in revenues to the county

that will come about as the police, the community college and, eventually, the county workers' contracts are settled. Combine the increased need for revenues to fund these contracts with the sunseting of the 1% sales tax in 1996, and a huge hole looms on the horizon.

The elected officials have been on borrowed time for the last two years, and Suffolk County is going to be in a terrible financial predicament when these impacts hit, unless plans have

been made and implemented to cut back on the size of government.

The taxes in this county are forcing residents out of their homes. This is not fair, nor is it the way that government is supposed to work.

The financial crisis that is coming, unless addressed now, will cause more devastation. There is still time to mitigate the impact, but as every day passes, time runs out.

Let's get our priorities straight.

And why not?

In Clinton health plan

The devil is in the details

From the start, we have been doubtful about the Clinton health plan. The proposed bill is close to 1,400 pages and not the kind of reading material the average person is about to sit down and digest. We have read hundreds of articles both pro and con on the benefits and the deficits of the proposal. The more we have read, the more we have reason to question.

Outside of the obvious restrictions on being able to choose your own doctor or medical facility, which we abhor, our next concern was the cost. Nothing the government does is cheaper than the private entrepreneur or the individual can do. On the surface, it appears that the plan would provide universal coverage for everyone. The cost of covering a family would be in the neighborhood of \$4,000 to \$5,000. Eighty percent of the premiums would be paid by business, 20% by employees.

We recently listened to a debate on C-Span and were brought to the realization that on top of the employer and employee payments, the

government had worked in an additional average taxation of \$3,000 on every employee. These taxes are both direct and hidden.

The plan would eliminate over one million jobs nationwide. The cost of providing unemployment and welfare benefits was not calculated. When you realize that 87% of the American public has health insurance of one kind or another, you are left to question why we should support programs that will affect only 13% of the population. Even this 13% still have coverage through clinics and hospitals, or they have the wealth to pay for services on demand even though they do not want to.

We think the American people are more concerned about the escalating cost of healthcare rather than the universal coverage. Many of us remember the days when the cost of a doctor's visit was under \$15. The cost of a medical plan for a family was well under \$100. Today, it is not uncommon for a pregnancy and delivery to cost \$5,000. Serious medical conditions can run upwards of \$100,000. The cost of medicine and

medical protection has far outstripped inflation.

There are many reasons why the cost of medicine is so high—malpractice, the high cost of a medical education, federally-imposed mandates and unionized support labor. All these factors have contributed to the cost. The Clinton plan does not really address any of these problems, although this was reportedly its original goal.

The Clinton plan does stick its nose very deeply into our personal lives and allows big brother to become the keeper from the cradle to the grave.

We expect there will be some frantic maneuvering in an attempt to pass some form of healthcare before Congress adjourns. An ill-conceived, misunderstood health plan would be far worse than what we have. We should not rush into a no man's land without understanding the water or the terrain.

Put healthcare aside for this session of Congress.

And why not?

Beware of strangers bearing gifts

Governor Mario M. Cuomo came to Long Island last week bearing election year gifts, or at least the illusion of them. There was nothing tangible, just lots of promises.

Cuomo, during his 12 years in office, has pretty much ignored Long Island except to pass the wrath of misery down on the residents' heads. He brags about tax cuts, then delays their implementation. He has slashed state aid to education and has done nothing to resolve the need for changes in the state aid formula nor and end to mandates.

Well, being an election year, he came bearing a bag of promised goodies but, true to form, no idea what they would cost or how they would be paid for. Cuomo spoke of developing an Excelsior High School, a super educational facility where students with

"special abilities in science, mathematics and technology are brought together and matched with exceptional faculty and facilities," according to a press statement from his office. Nice concept, but he doesn't have the foggiest idea of whether it will be in Nassau or Suffolk. He doesn't say how much it would cost or if the state will pick up the entire tab. He doesn't say who will pay for the teachers and the support services. Just another promise, election year rhetoric from one of the most skilled orators since they invented hot air.

This is the same Cuomo who cut back year after year on state aid to our local school districts. This is the guy who wanted to cut almost two-thirds of the state aid to Long Island and redistribute it elsewhere in the state. Don't

forget Mario Cuomo was the guy who proposed capping school taxes at their astronomically high current levels and then create an additional income tax to fund more spending.

Cuomo has never ordered the State Education Department to take a serious look at the state paying for the basic educational requirements that are mandated and lead to a Regents diploma, and then allowing the local districts to enact and vote upon electives selected by the school boards. This one single move would create tax relief here on Long Island. Cuomo prefers to talk about the illusionary new Excelsior school while he ignores the cries for relief from people who are losing their homes.

Is this vague promise of a super school designed to cause people to for-

get the local hardships that his cuts in state aid have caused? Cuomo was angered when members of the press dared to suggest he was here seeking to buy votes with state dollars. But having lived through the turmoil Cuomo's state aid cuts have caused for the entire local public school system, and his lack of action to bring a resolution to the financial crisis he has helped cause, what else could anyone think?

Cuomo would like you to forget that he is the man who created the sweetheart financial deal of the century, the LILCO/Shoreham settlement that has caused us to pay for Shoreham three times over. Every time you pay your LILCO bill you are paying for Cuomo's inept management.

If Cuomo had come bearing a gift of low cost power for our local schools, or a vow to push for competitive wheeling of electrical power through the current monopolistic utilities' transmission lines, there may have been some beneficial value to his visit. If he had arrived with a solution to the high tax problems that, coupled with the high energy costs, are driving businesses out of Long Island, his rhetoric about making Long Island a high-tech community, a dream voiced by numerous other politicians without any substance about how to make it happen, would be worth hearing. But relief from energy cost and high taxes were not among his "gifts."

Coming to Long Island with a bag of illusionary gimmicks may be good for headlines, but it is not good for Long Islanders. Slick talk, broken promises and empty pledges are the governor's trademarks.

We have had enough of Mario. This year, we have an opportunity to send him packing. We should.

And why not?

This bill is a crime

The Crime Bill is almost passed. Barring any last minute snags, President Clinton is expected to sign it into law. The bill was caught up in great debate and emotionalism.

Everyone wants to stop crime. Nobody is against that, but this bill is more shill than reality. As was brought out in the debate, there is pork by the barrel full. Even the substance of the law leaves little to cheer about.

The bill was touted to put 100,000 cops on the streets. As the debate wound down, the number was dropped to 20,000 per year over five years. The real crime in the bill is that the federal government will only partially fund these police for those five years, with local governments footing a share of the costs. After five years, it becomes

another mandate on local communities. They will have to pick up the whole tab, one hundred percent.

There is money to build prisons, but guess who will end up with the staffing, the biggest part of the cost? You got it—we, the local taxpayers. Washington to the rescue, by putting another noose around our necks.

Nineteen different types of weapons are banned under the bill. Did anyone who voted for this bill think for one moment that this will stop the criminals from getting their hands on the guns? Get real! The folks who we are trying to control under this law sneer at all laws. They are not going to pay any more attention to a law banning a weapon than they are going to pay attention to God's law of the com-

mandments that states, "Thou shalt not kill."

If Congress in all its wisdom had wanted to put meaning into the bill and make criminals think twice, it would have enacted a law that called for a minimum of a life sentence for using a gun in the commission of a crime, and if the person who used the gun killed anyone, they faced mandatory execution. The only thing this so-called ban accomplished was to infringe upon Americans' Second Amendment rights. A little bit here, a little bit there, and we will not have a Constitution.

The Republicans fought the bill on pork. The Liberals fought the bill on emotionalism. The American public lost.

And why not?

Point of view

'When the game was a game'

By Roy W. Guttman, R.W.G Brokerage

Memories of the 1940s and '50s reminded me of the time when opening day created an aura of excitement throughout what was once a wonderful city to live in.

I would sit by the radio and listen to Red Barber put me in the "catbird" seat. On the days that I was in school and I could not listen to the Dodger game, I would listen to Ward Wilson recreate the game at 7 p.m. on the radio. I would wait for my Dad to bring home the New York World so that I could read the sports section. During the summer when I had no school, I would often take the trolley to Ebbets Field and with a dollar in my pocket, I would have an afternoon of the greatest pleasure that a child could ever have.

There were many times that I went to Ebbets Field without the 50 cents that I needed to enter the ball park. I would go very early and walk in with either Pee Wee, Stanky or Walker. Those were the days when the players cared about the fans, and they cared about the game. They gave me a smile and autographed a piece of paper and sometimes would even give me a ball. It is different today, not because of how much money the players are earning but because of their attitude. They have forgotten that it is the fan that pays their salary, whether it be through the television contracts or from the people who go to the stadiums to watch them play. Back in the days when the game

was a game, the boys of summer needed that job. They worried when they got injured because there was somebody always there to take their place. To most of the players today, the World Series, the Allstar game, and the fans don't mean anything. There is no longer any loyalty on the part of the player because in a few years he will be a free agent and will move on to a team who will pay him the most money.

The owners themselves have brought about these problems. Certainly, they did not treat the players fairly prior to the formation of the union, but the players have been great contributors to the downfall of what was once a game.

In 1945, my Dad and an uncle had season tickets to all 13 Dodger night games. I went along to most of those games, and I can remember the very first one. The players had returned from their days overseas. With the end of World War II, this was to be the beginning of a new era in this country, a time of excitement, world peace and an opportunity for prosperity. During my first Dodger night baseball game, as the evening progressed, my eyes opened wide when the field became bathed in the lights on the top of the field. I was five years old and I could not believe that it looked like high noon in the stadium. Our seats were on the rail behind third base, and when I would call out a player's name, he would turn around and give me a smile. At the

end of the game, we exited onto the field and I can remember dragging my father to first base and asking one of the few ushers that ringed the base lines if I could touch the base. Red Barber even broadcasted that little incident, and so my mother at home heard it on the radio. Those were the days when the game was a game.

The days of Jackie, Pee Wee, Campy and the Duke, Gil, Cox, Hernanski and Newk, Oisk, the Preacher and George Shuba provided the fans with a team that was part of the family. That was all when the game was a game. Virtually every city that had a major league baseball team had that same camaraderie with the community. Cities like New York, Boston, Chicago and St. Louis were even more fortunate. We had more than one team.

You had to live through that era to understand the feeling. Nobody born after 1955 can ever imagine what it was like when the game was a game.

It was unthinkable that a professional baseball player would charge for his autograph. Today, it is commonplace, and I find it unconscionable. Players today walk away from the kids because they themselves have forgotten how to be kids. The players bear a great deal of responsibility for what has happened to the game. They have the exposure to the fans, not the owners. They themselves can either promote or destroy what the Ruth's Cobbs, Robinsons, Musical's, Williams, etc. created.

Today I pass by school yards that are empty. During the 1940s and '50s, every school yard in the City of New York was filled with boys playing softball. The girls sat on the sidelines wearing our baseball caps and cheering us on. Win or lose, we had a wonderful time. Those were the days when the game was a game.

Baseball 1994 has set itself up for a collision between the players, the owners and the fans that will take years to repair. The damage that has been gradually eroding the young children's interest in the sport has been apparent by looking at the school yards.

Baseball is no longer a game, but the players must look back in time and try to recapture that feeling that existed prior to 1960. They and they alone must promote "the game." They must encourage today's youngsters to go back to the school yards, to flip the trading cards and to remember what it was like to be eight or 10 years old.

The owners must do whatever is necessary to reduce the price of a ticket to those upper deck seats that often go unsold. They must make it affordable for the minority children of all ages to attend a baseball game, have a hot dog, fries and beverage.

When this can occur, the game will be returned to the fans. After all, it is the fans that made the game of baseball a game.